HASTENING THE PAROUSIA IN THE ROMANIAN TRANSLATIONS OF *2 PETER* 3:12*

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Résumé Le présent étude a pour but l'analyse de l'expression grecque προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας dans les traductions roumaines de *2 Pet* 3:12. La tradition biblique en roumain comprend toute la gamme des significations présentes dans: les traductions vernaculaires anciennes et modernes. Il existe essentiellement trois traductions du participe σπεύδοντας : « hâtant à », « désirant » et « hâtant ». La dernière est devenue la plus présente dans les traductions modernes. Les œuvres lexicographiques grecs du NT oscillent entre les trois options, mais les plus connus (*e.g.*, BDAG, LOUW-NIDA) favorisent la forme transitive (« hâtant »). Cette forme surgit quelques questions, abordées dans notre recherche : (1) la traduction la plus adéquate du gr. σπεύδοντας exige la forme transitive ? (2) dans quelle mesure l'église peut-elle déterminer (hâter ou retarder) l'avènement du jour de Dieu ? (3) le jour de Dieu est un événement fixe ou flexible ? (4) le jour de Dieu est conditionné? La réponse à la première question est offerte par les traductions modernes, qui traduisent σπεύδοντας par « hâtant », tandis que « le jour de Dieu » est complément d'objet. La conclusion s'appuie sur des arguments lexicaux, syntaxiques et discursifs. La réponse à la deuxième question vient de l'analyse du contexte littéraire. L'église ne peut que se hâter en anticipation du jour de Dieu. La réponse à la troisième et à la quatrième question est en concordance avec la réponse antérieure : le jour de Dieu est fixé, mais en même temps conditionné. Cela signifie qu'il a établi le jour de la Parousie et cela ne peut pas être changée. Toutefois, Dieu a pris en considération le moment où les conditions seraient remplies. En conclusion, la seule chose que l'église peut faire en anticipation de la Parousie est d'être préparée spirituellement et active du point de vue missionnaire.
Mots-clés : hâte, retard, jour de Dieu, Parousie, *2 Pet* 3:12, traduction, roumaine.

1. Translations of προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας

The Romanian translations must be analyzed in the context of the shift from the older to the modern vernacular versions of the Bible. Some of the most important older translations include the *Vulgate*, the Coptic (Sahidic and Bohairic), Tyndale, Luther, Geneva, and the KJV. All these consider that the participle σπεύδοντας

* *Hâtant la Parousie dans les traductions roumaines de* 2 Pet *3:12.*

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means "hastening" and they rendered it intransitively. With some stylistic variations, the resulting translation of the phrase in *2 Pet* 3:12 is "waiting for and hastening towards the coming of the day of God."[1] The second rendition found in the older translations is present in Peshitta,[2] which conveys σπεύδοντας as "desiring." The older translations focused univocally on the attitude of the believer towards an immutable day – the day of God. In this vein, the divine day is static and the ones "moving" are the Christians. However, things change with the rise of modern translations.

In modern times, the participle σπεύδοντας is rendered as "hastening towards" in a few bible versions including MGK (modern Greek katharevousa), Webster, and Young's literal translation.[3] The Peshitta translation of σπεύδοντας as "desiring" virtually disappeared. In its stead, a new rendition comes to light, as modern Greek, English, French, German, Spanish, and Italian translations demonstrate. They put forward the transitive interpretation of σπεύδοντας, "hastening," with "the day of God" as direct object.[4] With very few exceptions, modern translations discarded

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[1] (1) "expectantes et *properantes* in adventum Dei diei" – waiting for and hastening towards the coming of the day of God (VUL); (2a) Literal translation from Sahidic: "expecting and hastening toward the presence of the day of God" (NT COPT. 1911: 104-105); (2b) Bohairic: "Gazing out in [an] haste forward to the day of the coming of the Lord" (NT COPT. 1909: 85); (3) "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God" (TNT, Tyndale, 1534; PNT, Bishop's New Testament, 1595; Geneva Bible, 1599; KJV); (4) "daß ihr wartet und eilet zu der Zukunft des Tages des Herrn" (Luther 1545).

[2] Peshitta: "expecting and *desiring* the coming of the day of Aloha" (ETH, Etheridge Translation of the NT Peshitta, 1849).

[3] (1) προσμένοντες καὶ *σπεύδοντες* εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς ἡμέρας τοῦ Θεοῦ, "waiting for and hastening towards the coming of the days of God" (MGK, Greek Vamvas Bible, 1850); (2) "Looking for and hasting to the coming of the day of God" (WEB, Webster, 1833); (3) "waiting for and hasting to the presence of the day of God" (YLT, Young's Literal Translation, 1862).

[4] (1) Προσδοκῶντας καὶ *ἐπισπεύδοντας* τὴν παρουσία τῆς ἡμέρας τοῦ Θεοῦ – "Waiting for and hastening onward the coming of the day of God" (MET, Metaglottisis modern Greek version, 2004); (2) "waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (RSV); (3) "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (NAS); (4) "as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming" (NIV); (5) "as you wait for the Day of God and work to hasten its coming" (CJB); (6) "tandis que vous attendez et hâtez l'avènement du jour de Dieu" (LSG; French Louis Segond; 1910; NEG, Nouvelle Edition Geneve, 1979); (7) "Vous qui attendez et qui hâtez la venue du jour de Dieu" (TOB, French Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible, 1988); (8) "dadurch, daß ihr erwartet und beschleuniget die Ankunft des Tages Gottes" (SCH, German Schlachter Version, 1951); (9) "Wartet auf den Tag Gottes und beschleunigt seine Ankunft" (ZUR, Zürcher Bibel, 2007, 2008); (10) "attendendo e affrettando la venuta del giorno di Dio" (CEI, La Sacra Bibbia della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana); (11) "mentre attendete e affrettate la venuta del giorno di Dio" (NRV, La Sacra BibbiaNuova Riveduta, 1994). See also NET, NLT.

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the renditions that were frequent in the past and introduced a new tradition within which the day of God seems to be flexible and, to a certain degree, dependent upon the believers on earth.

Interestingly enough, Romanian translations of the NT cover both the older and the modern translations. The intransitive rendition of σπεύδοντας is present in the first NT ever printed in Romanian (1648), in a version produced in Iaşi and published in 1874, and the translation called "Fidela", released in 2014, which is heavily indebted to the *Vulgate* and KJV.[5] The interpretation of σπεύδοντας as "desiring," like in *Peshitta*, is present in Romanian already in the Bible printed in Blaj, in 1795, in one of the main orthodox translations (called "Sinodală", 1914), and even in the translation of Dumitru Cornilescu (1891-1975), the most widespread protestant translation, in editions before 1921.[6] The most preferred translation of σπεύδοντας in Romanian is, however, the transitive "hastening." This is as old as the Bible from Bucharest (1688) – the first Bible printed in Romanian, translated following the Greek text of *Septuagint* – and found its place in modern orthodox, catholic, protestant and inter-confessional translations.[7]

2. NT Greek Lexicons

The lexicons are divided upon the meaning of σπεύδοντας in *2 Pet* 3:12. In BDAG: 938, the participle is taken as "to cause something to happen or come into being by

[5] (1) "Aşteptîndu şi *grăbind* spre venirea zileei lui Dumnezău" – "Waiting for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God" (*Noul Testament*, Bălgrad, 1648); (2) "Asceptândŭ şi *grăbindu-vĕ* spre venirea dileĭ luĭ Dumnedeŭ" – "Waiting for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God" (*Sănta Scriptură*, 1922, reprodusă după Traducerea de Iaşi, 1874); (3) "Aşteptând şi *grăbindu-vă* spre venirea zilei lui Dumnezeu" – "Waiting for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God" (Biblia "Fidela", 2014). On the Romanian Bibles mentioned here and *infra*, see the description and bibliography of Munteanu (2013).

[6] (1) "Ca să aşteptaţi şi *să doriţi să fie mai degrabă* venirea zilei Domnului Dumnezeu" – "In order to wait for and desire the soon coming of the day of the Lord God" (Biblia de la Blaj, 1795); (2) "Aşteptând şi *dorind a fi mai degrab* venirea zilei lui Dumnezeu" – "Waiting for and desiring the soon coming of the day of God" (Biblia Sinodală, 1914); (3) "Să aşteptaţi şi *să doriţi să vină mai degrabă* ziua aceea a Domnului" – "To wait for and desire the soon coming of that day of the Lord" (Noul Testament Cornilescu, 1920).

[7] (1) "Aşteptînd şi *sîrguind* venirea zilei lui Dumnezău" – "Waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (Biblia de la Bucureşti, 1688); (2-6) "Aşteptând şi *grăbind* venirea zilei lui Dumnezeu" – "Waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (Niţulescu, 1874; Cornilescu, 1924; Noua traducere literală, 2001; Noua Traducere Românească, 2006; Biblia catolică, 2-13; Noul Testament, SBIR 2014); (7-10) "Aşteptând şi *grăbind* venirea zilei Domnului" – "Waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of the Lord" (Gala Galaction, 1939; Biblia sinodală, 1968; Biblia ortodoxă cu trimiteri, 1982; Bartolomeu Anania, 2001).

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exercising special effort." THAYER, *s.v.* σπεύδω, attributes to the same participle the meaning "to desire earnestly." FRIBERG: 353 oscillates between: "urge on, be eager for, cause to happen soon." For MOUNCE: 1273, the semantic range of σπεύδοντας in *2 Pet* 3:12 falls somewhere in between "to urge on, impel, quicken; to quicken in idea, to be eager for the arrival of." ZODHIATES, *s.v.*, interprets σπεύδω as "to hasten after something, to await with eager desire." LOUW-NIDA: 663 states that the significance of the participle in *2 Pet* 3:12 is " 'making the day of God come soon' or 'hurrying up the day of God'." They also say that another possible shade is "doing your best to cause." EDNT: 264 states: "It is transitive only in *2 Pet* 3:12: 'waiting for and *earnestly desiring* (προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας) the coming of the day of God'." The differences in translation may reflect the difference in the opinions of the lexicographers. At the same time, the modern translations bear the mark of the high esteem BDAG and LOUW-NIDA are held in. Hence, the most common rendition: "waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God."

3. Questions of Research

If this assertion were in reference to God it would need no clarification. God is sovereign over time so He is the one intervening and bringing history to its end. For instance, *Sir* 36:7 begins with σπεῦσον καιρόν – hasten the time, which is a supplication of Israel addressed to God to put an end to the domination of her adversaries and save His people like in the times of old. But with the believers as subject of the hastening, several questions need to be addressed: (1) is σπεύδοντας to be translated transitively; (2) to what extent can the church determine (hasten or delay) the coming of the day of God; (3) is the day of God a fixed or a flexible event; (4) is the day of God conditional?

4. A Review of Opinions

4.1. Older Commentaries: Desiring for the Day of the Lord

Old commentaries seem to follow the old translations. Thus, in accordance with his own translation, LUTHER WORKS (*ad loc.* Logos 4) considers that "hastening" refers to the Christian's keenness in preparing for Parousia,[8] since that day is imminent.

[8] Davids (2006: 290) considers that the expressions "the day of the Lord" (*2 Pet* 3:10), "the day of God" (*2 Pet* 3:12) are, for Peter, references "to the same eschatological event, which is also spoken of as the 'coming' or 'Parousia' of Christ (*2 Pet* 1:16; 3:4)." The unusual (to the NT) character of the expression itself may result in the conclusion that since the Father and the Son are not one and the same, so it is with the days of God and the Lord. "Nonetheless, the coming of God's day is inseparable from the future coming of Christ. When Christ comes, the day of God will commence, this world will be destroyed, and a new one will be instituted" (Schreiner 2007: 390).

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Calvin holds that the two participles (προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας) are interdependent, resulting in one whole construct with the meaning "to wait hastily." The contradictory character of this construct is analogous to the Latin adage *festina lente*, Calvin infers. By "waiting for," Peter "refers to the endurance of hope; and he sets hastening in opposition to topor; and both are very apposite. For as quietness and waiting are the peculiarities of hope, so we must always take heed lest the security of the flesh should creep in; we ought, therefore, strenuously to labor in good works, and run quickly in the race of our calling" (CALVIN, COMM., *ad loc.* Logos 4). WESLEY (*ad loc.* Logos 4) seems to anticipate the modern mainstream view when he states that we can hasten the day of God by "earnest desires and fervent prayers." These prayers do not seem to be a direct means by which one could determine the Parousia to come faster. It is however a metaphor of intensive desire, which would lead one to hasten the fulfillment of the desire if in his or her power (Demarest 1865: 213).

4.2. Modern Commentaries: Aspects of Hastening the Parousia

Commentators endeavored to find out whether Peter supports the idea that the coming of God's day is solely in His hand or Christians could make it come more quickly. By the end of the19th century, it became clear for most commentators[9] that the believers can hasten the Parousia by growing in holiness and missionary effort (*e.g.*, Williams 1888: 110).[10] Some scholars argue for this from the standpoint of the Jewish background, which is in favor of such a scenario: "In Rabbinic literature there are references attesting to the belief that repentance does bring in the end. A passage from 2 Clement (12.6) cites a statement from Jesus to the effect that when Christians live

[9] But see Robertson (1997: *ad loc.* Logos 4). The grammarian explains that σπεύδοντας usually means 'to hasten' and rarely it is transitive "as here either (preferably so) 'to hasten on the parousia' by holy living (*cf. 1 Pet* 2:12), with which idea compare *Matt* 6:10 and *Acts* 3:19f., or to desire earnestly (*Is* 16:5)." The Lutheran theologian R.C.H. Lenski considers that any translation that would suggest "hastening" to be a human action seems to downplay the doctrine of the Bible: "We need not labor the sense by taking σπεύδω in the sense of 'hasten,' speed up the coming of the day of the Lord, so that it will come sooner than it would otherwise come. We question whether the holy conduct of Christians can hasten the Day of Judgment, whether this is the teaching of the Bible. The decline of faith and the coldness of love would have more of a tendency to hurry the day along. This verb is widely used in the sense of 'to be eager' [...], which fits perfectly here as an intensifying synonym of 'expecting' " (Lenski 1966: 348).

[10] "Hastening the Coming." The Church may be said to bring the day nearer when it prays "Thy Kingdom come." And not prayer only, but the "holy behaviours and pieties" of God's children, which promote the repentance of the ungodly (*1 Pet* 2:12), are a condition of the coming of the Kingdom, and prepare the Lord's way" (Bigg 1901: 298).

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godly lives and refrain from sexual impurities, then the kingdom of God will come" (Arichea/ Hatton 1993: 158-159).[11] Others argue for the transitive rendition of σπεύδοντας based on intertextual arguments. One of the best summaries of these evidences is found in Kistemaker/ Hendricksen (1953-2001: 338-339):

> Peter is saying that we have a vital part in shortening the time set for the coming of God's day. This saying corresponds with the ancient prayer the church has prayed since the first century: *Maranatha*, 'Come, O Lord!' (*1 Cor* 16:22; also see *Rev* 22:20). Furthermore, it harmonizes with the petition *your kingdom come* (*Matt* 6:10, *Luke* 11:2). In his discourse on the last day Jesus instructs his followers to proclaim the gospel to all nations, "and then the end will come" (*Matt* 24:14). And last, Peter exhorts Christians "to live holy and godly lives" to speed the coming of God's day. When Peter addresses a crowd of people after healing the crippled beggar at the temple, he tells the people to repent in order to hasten the coming of Christ (*Acts* 3:19-21). [...] Peter writes that God delays the coming of the day of the Lord because God wants "everyone" to come to repentance (v. 9). Accordingly, if we wish to speed the coming of God's day, we should evangelize the world. When we bring the last of God's children to faith and repentance so that his house may be full (*Luke* 14:23), then the end comes.

Even though it was clear that the church could influence the divine eschatology, opinions were divided upon collateral aspects. For instance, for some, this hastening would not contradict the fact that "the day was fixed in the purpose of God" (*ibid.*). But for others (Lange *et al.* 2008: 47) it would. Others instead prefer to keep the immutability of God's day and the human determination of it in a balance. Bauckham (2002: 325) speaks about both human and divine point of view. God's sovereignty fixed the Day, but the human contribution was taken into consideration for that divine decision. From a human perspective, repentance can hasten the coming of the end, yet the final decision is God's who considers the human involvement.[12] Though Schreiner (2007: 390-391) agrees with Bauckham, he prefers to highlight the human part: "such teaching must never cancel out the call to live godly lives and the teaching that our prayers and godliness can speed his coming. We must not fall prey to rationalism that either squeezes out divine sovereignty or ignores human responsibility. Both of them must be held in tension, and here the accent falls on what human beings can do to hasten the day of God."

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[11] For supplementary arguments from Syriac *Apocalypse of Baruch*, Pseudo-Philo, Barnabas, Jerusalem Talmud, The Cairo Geniza, Babylonian Talmud: tractate *Sanhedrin* and *Baba Bathra*, *Midraš Rabbah* On Canticles, Babylonian Talmud tractate *Yoma*, *Shepherd of Hermas*, and *Similitudes*, see Bauckham (2002: 325) and Davids (2006: 290-291).

[12] Walls/ Anders (1999: 143) see the timing of the Parousia as somewhat related to the spiritual growth of the church but venture not to explain more what they consider to be a mystery.

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5. Σπεύδω in a Pragmatic Context

In order to grasp the meaning of a certain word it is not enough to consult lexicon, a dictionary, or interpret the morphology or syntax of the word, and based on these, to choose the definition which seems most appropriate to us. All these instruments or exercises are good, but modern linguistics draws attention to pragmatics, which is language in context. Ideally, what the exegete needs to do is to check every single occurrence of the word in a corpus, which is relevant to the text he studies, and check the behavior of the word in its various contexts. Only after these, he can approach the term under study and its particular context.

Σπεύδω records 72 hits in LXX, Apocrypha, and the NT. Whenever the meaning is intransitive the following features are present in the syntax and discourse: (1) σπεύδω is followed by another verb, which shows what action is done in speed,[13] (2) if σπεύδω is finite, and the second verb is also finite, then the two verbs are linked by καί or another conjunction,[14] (3) when σπεύδω is finite, and the second verb is a participle or an infinitive (or the other way around), the conjunction is usually missing,[15] (4) the direct object is either missing or is always related to the second verb which is in connection to σπεύδω.[16] Apparently, none of these features are present in the wording in *2 Pet* 3:12.

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[13] *E.g.*, Σπεῦσον καὶ φύρασον τρία μέτρα σεμιδάλεως καὶ ποίησον ἐγκρυφίας (*Gen* 18:6), ἔσπευσαν καὶ καθεῖλαν ἕκαστος τὸν μάρσιππον αὐτοῦ (*Gen* 44:11), σπεύσας Μωυσῆς κύψας ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν προσεκύνησεν (*Ex* 34:8), Αβδιου ἔσπευσεν καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ καὶ εἶπεν (*3 Kgs* 18:7), ἔσπευσαν καὶ ἔλαβον ἕκαστος τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ (*4 Kgs* 9:13), σπεύσατε καὶ πέμψατέ τινας (*2 Mac* 11:37), σπεῦσον καὶ ἔξελθε ἐν τάχει (*Acts* 22:18), etc.

[14] *E.g.*, ἔσπευσεν Αβρααμ ἐπὶ τὴν σκηνὴν πρὸς Σαρραν και εἶπεν αὐτῇ (*Gen* 18:6), σπεῦσον οὖν τοῦ σωθῆναι (*Gen* 19:22), ἔσπευσεν ὁ λαὸς καὶ διέβησαν (*Jos* 4:10), ἔσπευσεν Αβιγαια καὶ ἔλαβεν διακοσίους ἄρτους (*1 Kgs* 25:18), ἔσπευσεν καὶ κατεπήδησεν ἀπὸ τῆς ὄνου καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐνώπιον Δαυιδ ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αὐτῆς (*1 Kgs* 25:23), εἰ μὴ ἔσπευσας καὶ παρεγένου εἰς ἀπάντησίν μοι (*1 Kgs* 25:34), etc.

[15] *E.g.*, σπεύσασα καθεῖλεν τὴν ὑδρίαν αὐτῆς (*Gen* 24:46), σπεύσας Μωυσῆς κύψας ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν προσεκύνησεν (*Ex* 34:8), σπεύσαντες ἐνέπρησαν τὴν πόλιν ἐν τυρί (*Jos* 8:19). But, σπεύσαντες δῦν ἀνάβητε (*Gen* 45:9), διαβαίνων σπεῦσον (*2 Kgs* 17:16), ὁ βασιλεὺς Ροβοαμ ἔσπευσεν τοῦ ἀναβῆναι εἰς τὸ ἅρμα τοῦ φυγεῖν εἰς Ιερουσλημ (*2 Chr* 10:18), ἐνιαυτὸν κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν καὶ σπεύσατε λαλῆσαι (*2 Chr* 24:5), σέσωκας τὴν ψυχήν σου σπεύσασα καταβῆναι εἰς πρόσωπον τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν (*Jdt* 10:15), σπεύσας κατάβηθι (*Luke* 19:5), σπεύσας κατέβη (*Luke* 19:6), etc.

[16] *E.g.*, ἔσπευσεν καὶ καθεῖμεν τὴν ὑδρίαν ἐπὶ τὸν βραχίονα αὐτῆς καὶ ἐπότισεν αὐτόν (*Gen* 24:18), ἔσπευσεν καὶ ἐξεκένωσεν τὴν ὑδρίαν (*Gen* 24:20), τότε ἔσπευσαν ἡγεμόνες Εδωμ καὶ ἄρχοντες Μωαβιτῶν (*Ex* 15:15), ἔσπευσεν καὶ ἐξῆθεν (*Jos* 8:14), ἔσπευσεν ἀνὴρ Βενιαμιν καὶ εἶδεν (*Jdg* 20:41), σπουδῇ ἔσπευσαν ἰσχυροὶ αὐτοῦ (*Jdg* 5:22), ὁ ἄνθρωπος σπεύσας εἰσῆλθεν καὶ ἀπήγγειλεν τῷ Ηλι (*1 Kgs* 4:14), ὁ ἀνὴρ σπεύσας προσῆλθεν πρὸς Ηλι καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ (*1 Kgs* 4:16), σπεῦσον καὶ μὴ στῇς (*1 Kgs* 20:38),

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There are only a couple of examples where σπεύδω has a direct object: (1) σπεῦσον καιρὸν – "hasten the time" (*Sir* 36:7) and (2) σπεῦδων δικαιοσύνην – "hastening righteousness" (*Isa* 16:5). As mentioned before, the first example represents a prayer of Israel for God to hasten the time of intervention on their behalf. It seems less problematic than *2 Pet* 3:12. The second example is related, for the prophet Isaiah evokes the justice of God, nervously awaited to unleash sooner. In light of all the usages mentioned above, it seems clear that προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας must be translated as most modern translations do: "waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God." The intransitive translation of σπεύδω, though amply present in Hellenistic Greek, is possible only in the conditions already referred to, which are not fulfilled in *2 Pet* 3:12. Also, the translation "desiring" is not supported by the usages in LXX, Apocrypha, and the NT.

6. The Literary Context of *2 Pet* 3:12

To what extent is the church responsible for the sooner coming of the day of God is the second question of this study, to be answered through the analysis of the literary context of *2 Pet* 3. That the participle σπεύδοντας is problematic when it is taken transitively seems to be shown first by the fact that codex ℵ omits it. In order to understand what Peter really intended with the hortatory phrase προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας, the reader needs to consider the context. Everything Peter writes from *2 Pet* 3:5 onward is for addressing the doubts expressed by the scoffers in the last days (ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν), detailed in vv. 3-4. These scoffers (ἐμπαῖκται) bring in two problems: one that is behavioral and one of comprehension and faith. While they behave as driven by their own lusts (κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πορευόμενοι), they call into question the promise of Christ's return (ποῦ ἐστιν ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ;), seemingly having no interest in experiencing anything other than the *status quo* of their demeanor. Their argument that the promise is far from certain comes from the following rationale: ἀφ' ἧς γὰρ οἱ πατέρες ἐκοιμήθησαν, πάντα οὕτως διαμένει ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κτίσεως – "for ever since our fathers have fallen asleep, all things remain thus from the foundation of creation."[17] If this is a genuine epistle of Apostle Peter,[18] then it is

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σπεῦδε καὶ δεῦρο (*1 Kgs* 23:27), ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν Αβρααμ ἔσπευδεν τὸν ἐθνοπάτορα υἱὸν σφαγιάσαι (*4 Mac* 16:20), ἦλθαν σπεύσαντες καὶ ἀνεῦραν τήν τε Μαριὰμ καὶ τὸν Ἰωσήφ (*Luke* 2:16), etc.

[17] Unless otherwise specified, all translations from Greek are mine.

[18] In spite of the claim in *2 Pet* 1:1; 13-16, that Peter is the author, modern scholarship (*e.g.*, McCruden 2010: 596-598) dismisses it on the grounds of: (1) its Greek language, too good for a fisherman, (2) the false teaching, seemingly too gnostic, hence late, (3) Paul's

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curious that about 30 years after the ascension of Jesus,[19] doubts about the assurance of His return are strong and visible enough to require a whole chapter in the NT. This also shows a difficulty in passing the faith in His return from the first to the second generation.

Peter confutes the scoffers with five arguments. The first one is delineated in vv. 5-6. Peter states that these opponents want to overlook (λανθάνει γὰρ αὐτοὺς τοῦτο θέλοντας) that the world, made to come out of water by the word of God, was destroyed by water. The implication here is that since a global destruction of the earth was possible before, it may happen any time in the future. On this, Peter builds the second argument in v. 7. The present heaven and earth are stored up (τεθησαυρισμένοι) and kept, by the same word of God, for the Day of Judgment and destruction of the wicked. The world before the Flood and the world after are no different. The two paradigms are identical, only that the present world heads for its destruction. In the Flood, like in the last destruction of the earth, it was the word of God which stopped preserving the planet.

The third argument relies on a paraphrase of *Psa* 89:4: χίλια ἔτη ἐν ὀφταλμοῖς σου ὡς ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ ἐχθές ἥτις διῆλθεν καὶ φυλακὴ ἐν νυκτί – "1000 years in Your eyes are like the day of yesterday, which has passed, and as a watch in the night." Peter states in v. 8: μία ἡμέρα παρὰ κυρίῳ ὡς χίλια ἔτη καὶ χίλια ἔτη ὡς ἡμέρα μία. In *Ps* 89, by his statement, Moses wanted to illustrate the depth between the divine eternity and human transience. Peter's intent is to affirm that temporal calculations have no logic in light of God's permanence. Indeed, a lot of time has passed since the ancestors have fallen asleep and the day of Christ's return has not come. Yet, the point is not how much time God's people still have until the promise is fulfilled. The point is rather that their lives are very short. And, based on what Moses said, in light of God's eternity, their lives are like yesterday. But not only in light of God's eternity are they like yesterday, but also in the perspective of God's wrath against their lawlessness (*Psa* 90:7-8; LXX, 89:7-8). In other words, what they are supposed to count (ἐξαριθμήσασθαι, *Psa* 90:12; LXX, 89:12) is the days of their lives, not the time until the judgment will come upon them. Here is where the fourth argument comes into play.

In v. 9, Peter gives a straightforward answer to the delay hypothesis, which was raised by the scoffers in v. 4: οὐ βραδύνει κύριος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, ὥς τινες

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letters considered Scripture, phenomenon expected to have happened much later, (4) references to the death of our fathers, which allegedly indicates lateness, and (5) features of pseudonimity. Carson/ Moo (2005: 658-663) answer satisfactorily to all these objections.

[19] Even though Peter speaks about the scoffers in future tense (ἐλεύσονται) in v. 3, it becomes clear in v. 9 that the issue in current, as he writes in the present tense τινες βραδύτητα ἡγοῦνται – "some consider slowness".

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βραδύτητα ἡγοῦνται, ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς, μὴ βουλόμενός τινας ἀπολέσθαι ἀλλὰ πάντας εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι. The text reads: "The Lord is not slow in fulfilling the promise, as some understand slowness,[20] but He is patient toward you, not wishing to destroy anyone, but wishing all to come to repentance." Peter elaborates on the context of Moses' ἐπίστρεψον κύριε ἕως πότε (*Psa* 90:13; LXX, 89:13) suggesting that the reason why God did not answer this request of returning is that He wants as many as possible to be saved. Johnston highlights a relationship between the mentioning of Noah's flood (vv. 5-6) and the argument of the divine forbearance (v. 9). He points out that God patiently waited in the Noah's days. "But the unspoken implication is that He does not wait forever, for the Flood did come" (Johnston 1995: 173).[21]

If this is not enough, Peter adds a fifth argument in favor of Christ's return, which is comprised in the metaphor of the thief (v. 10). As the burglar has no intention to draw attention upon his intrusion, so the coming of Jesus needs not be expected to be noted by those who do not expect it. For this category, God's day will break through without notification.

Considering the certainty of the promise of Christ's return, Peter proceeds to exhort his readers with regards to certain practical aspects of faith in vv. 11-14. In contrast with the scoffer's evil desires (v. 3), those who believe in the return of Christ must be characterized by "holy conduct" (ἁγία ἀναστροφή) and "godliness" (εὐσέβεια).[22] The flow of the discourse in vv. 12-14 brings out a couple of interesting parallels. The day of God will cause the heavens and the actual elements to be burned by fire and will bring about the fulfilment of the promise that a new heaven and a new earth will thereafter be inaugurated. Since righteousness dwells in this new creation, a thorough preparation is paramount prior to that day.

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[20] It appears that the scoffers reckon the falseness of the Parousia promise on account of its delay (3:9a); henceforth, this group claimed that God's word and sovereignty are at stake. Neygrey (2008: 239) identifies possible Epicurean and Platonic backgrounds. "Epicureans used the delay of divine judgment as a formal argument against the doctrine of God's providence in the world. In Plutarch's *The Delay of Divine Judgment*, the characters cite the slowness of retribution as the most telling argument against the traditional doctrine: 'The delay [*bradytēs*] and procrastination of the Deity in punishing the wicked appears to me the most telling argument by far' (548C); '[...] his slowness [*bradytēs*] destroys belief in providence' (549B)."

[21] As Johnston (1995: 173) also points out, these limits of divine patience reflect the mosaic self-revelation of God in *Ex* 34:6-7. God is extremely patient, on the one hand, but He does punish the unrepentant guilty.

[22] "Godly lives are related to and grounded in eschatology. Those who disregard the future cosmos will not live well in the present one" (Schreiner 2007: 389); see also Perkins (1995: 191).

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This preparation is depicted through two pairs of verbs: προσδοκάω/ σπεύδω and προσδοκάω/ σπουδάζω. Due to the theological difficulty of προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας (v. 12),[23] but more importantly, based on the verbal parallels in the passage, one may suspect here a hyperbaton,[24] a misplacement of words. This was one of the permitted *schemata* (Lausberg 1998: 233-234), not to be confounded with a real solecism by metathesis, which had no excuse from a grammatical point of view. The words may seem misplaced, as Peter might have wanted to write: προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας "waiting for the coming of the day of God and hastening [intransitive]." Since, in the second part of v. 12, he explains in a subordinate clause what the day of God bringsplacing the phrase καὶ σπεύδοντας after the explanatory clause would have made the whole paragraph sound awkward. Therefore, the present form seems a good choice as it serves its purpose well enough.

Supposing that we have a neat style and there is no hyperbaton here, and that Peter really wanted to say that the believers can hasten the Parousia, this hastening is further explained in v. 14. This last verse is a sort of repetition of the picture in v. 12 with a slight and significant change. He writes: ταῦτα προσδοκῶντες σπουδάσατε ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι αὐτῷ εὑρεθῆναι ἐν εἰρήνῃ. From a lexical point of view, the shift from σπεύδω to σπουδάζω is of little importance. The contribution of the v. 14 to the understanding of the v. 12 is visible, however, at the level of syntax. Verse 14 reveals that for Peter to hasten the Parousia (transitive) means to hasten oneself (intransitive) to be found blameless and in peace with God, as repentance is the reason why time extended so much (v. 9). Apparently, in v. 14 Peter rephrases his thought in v. 12. In v. 12 he does not infer, as such, that the church can force God to come sooner. Yet, by hastening the process of their repentance, those waiting for the Parousia determine God to keep His promise and come, since they become ready. In the context of *2 Pet* 3, the spiritual preparation seems to draw the extent to which the church can hasten the return of Jesus.

7. A Fixed, But Conditional Day

The last two questions of this study revolve around the issue of conditionality: whether Parousia is conditional and its time is already fixed or flexible. In order to answer these concerns, we need an intertextual study, which would inform the issues raised by *2 Pet* 3:12. That God planned the day of Jesus' return based on the fulfillment of

[23] From a rhetorical point of view, there is sense in the present form: "More than likely the relationship here is that of Amplification resulting in the sense that their waiting for the Day of God is not to be a passive waiting" (Black *et al.* 1992: 266).

[24] The hyperbaton is "an artificial misplacement of a word (or words) as opposed to natural word order" (Blass *et al.* 1961: 252). For examples from the NT see Robertson (1919: 423-424).

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some conditions is clear, first, from *Matt* 24:14, καὶ κηρυχθήσεται τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ εἰς μαρτύριον πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καὶ τότε ἥξει τὸ τέλος – "and this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited world for testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." The end is dependent on the proclamation of the gospel. Does this imply that the faster the church proclaims the message, the faster the end will come? Logically yes. However, the answer needs to be qualified. For us, the terms "world" and "nations" have synchronic overtones. We think horizontally and in terms of our time. But for the God of *2 Pet* 3:8 the world has also diachronic dimensions (*cf. John* 17:20-21, *Acts* 2:39). Therefore, a generation which was faithful in preaching the gospel, as the Christians in the apostolic times, may have hastened the Parousia, but certainly not for them. From a diachronic perspective, the world was much greater than they could have ever imagined.

When the church preaches the Gospel, the return of Jesus is hastened, but only God knows when the proclamation reaches its climax and comes to an end. From a human point of view, we will never know how many more people need to hear the good news of salvation, or if they heard it, how much time they are allotted by the long-suffering God to come to repentance and thus be saved.

Aside from the proclamation of the Gospel, there is one more condition that needs to be fulfilled, since it plays a direct role in the decision about when should Jesus come back. This is affirmed in *2 Pet* 3:9; 11-14, that the church is to be spiritually prepared for His coming. Parousia is depicted in the NT, in agricultural language, as the harvest (*e.g.*, *Matt* 13:30; 39-40, *1 Cor* 15:23, *Rev* 14:15). God, as sower and gardener, has all interest in obtaining a plentiful crop (*cf. Isa* 5:1, 2, 4, *Luke* 13:8). Therefore, the time of the harvest is established when the results are optimal. Considering this, the Bible characters[25] who lived a life of faithfulness and obedience to God hastened the Parousia, in the sense that they were ready for it, yet they were not the beneficiaries (*cf. Heb* 11:40). This is because, like the concept of "world," God's "people" has a synchronic, but also, a diachronic dimension.[26] The point in all

[25] One could think of OT and NT bible figures such as Enoch, Elijah, Moises, Noah, Daniel, Job; the apostles, John the Baptist, his parents. About all these, the scriptures testify that they were righteous (not without weaknesses) in the sight of God.

[26] One could, for example, consider the case of the prostitute Rahab, initially meant presumably not to be born, had Israel been faithful and conquered Canaan right after the deliverance from Egypt. Yet, since Israel was unfaithful and unwilling to conquer Canaan, not only that Rahab gets born, but is spared from the destruction of Jericho, 40 years later, and made it into God's people and the illustrious list in Hebrews 11 and of the descendants of Jesus. Only God can see His people from tomorrow. Maybe, it was not the will of God for Israel to bewilder in the desert for forty years. But He surely had a plan for Rahab.

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these is that by proclaiming the Gospel to the world and preparing ourselves for heaven, we cannot control God's plans. Yes, God is pleased with it (preaching and spiritual preparation), and sad with the contrary, but we cannot make God dependent on the church.[27] God is sovereign.

Although the NT does not articulate a definitive statement regarding the immovability or flexibility of the day of Parousia, data suggests that the date might be settled. When Jesus said that Father knows about that day and hour (*Matt* 24:36, Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν [...] εἰ μὴ ὁ πατὴρ μόνος), He probably meant that the time of the Parousia, though a mystery to the Universe, is known to (*i.e.*, established by) God. The same idea is repeated in *Acts* 1:7, which describes the Father as keeping times and seasons under His authority (χρόνους ἢ καιροὺς [...] ὁ πατὴρ ἔθετο ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ). This suggests that the time when the kingdom comes is inaccessible, but not still to be decreed. God could set the date of the end of earth's history based on His foreknowledge, widely recognized in Scripture (*e.g.*, *Gen* 18:19, *Psa* 139:16, *Isa* 40:10, *Dan* 2:45; 10:14, *Rev* 4:1). He could foresee when the Gospel will be preached to the entire world and His people will be ready. And, thus God could establish the date when these conditions would be fulfilled. Therefore, to say today that by proclaiming the message of salvation and by being kept in readiness for meeting God, the people of God hastens the Parousia is somewhat distorted. At most, it can be said that the church hasten*ed* the Parousia in the foreknowledge of God. That is, the church influenced the decision of God by the time God took that decision. But in the present, the church can only hasten itself and become what God foresaw that it can be, from a missionary and spiritual point of view.

8. Conclusions

This study about hastening the Parousia in the Romanian translations of *2 Pet* 3:12 raised four questions. The first one was whether σπεύδοντας is to be translated transitively or intransitively. The findings proved that the transitive translation is correct, but the interpretation of the phrase as such makes much more sense if it is taken as intransitive. In other words, from a linguistic point of view, σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας means just this. But from the angle of the discourse, Peter seems to speak about the church's self-hastening to meet the conditions that God foresaw as being fulfilled by His people before Jesus is sent. This is also an answer to the second question, to what extent the church can determine (hasten or delay) the coming of the day of God. The church was taken into

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Likewise, it is not God's will to delay the Parousia because of His people's lack of preparation. It may be the will of God, however, to wait for others.

[27] See what Johnston (1995: 176) says: "While God is sovereign, He takes the human response into account."

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account when God set the date of Christ's return, which would mean that the church already hastened (or delayed) the Parousia. At present, the people of God could only put into practice (or step back from) the vision of God about them. In answer to the third and fourth questions, this study affirmed that the day of God is fixed and conditional. While God took into account the answer to His call and the involvement of the church, He is not dependent upon human beings. He is sovereign.

The Romanian translations of the NT appear to have been influenced to a certain degree by theological presuppositions when they chose the intransitive rendition of σπεύδοντας or a translation unrelated to the idea of haste. The translators may have wanted to avoid any interpretation that could present God's eschatological plans as determined by human frailty. At the same time, it should not be overlooked that prior translations played an important role in the decisions made when subsequent versions were undertaken.

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